

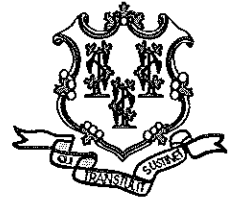


**STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

**Public Hearing Testimony**

**Government Administration and Elections Committee**

**February 28, 2011**



**S.B. No. 1059 (RAISED) AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF  
THE COMMISSION ON ENHANCING AGENCY OUTCOMES.**

The Department of Children and Families offers the following comments regarding section 21 of S.B. No. 1059 An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Commission on Enhancing Agency Outcomes.

Section 21 of the bill requires the Commissioner of Mental Health and Addiction Services to convene a workgroup and to report on a plan to deinstitutionalize the patients of Riverview Hospital for Children and Youth to the General Assembly's Government Administration and Elections Committee and to the Governor. The group shall consider the following: the quality of care provided to the patients; the promotion of home and community-based care; whether it is appropriate for state employees to continue to deliver services to the patients or whether private providers should deliver such services, or both; the possibility of downsizing staff without compromising the quality of care; and alternative prevention and intervention treatment programs that could result in an avoidance of inpatient care. Any recommendations contained in the plan shall be developed using a cost-benefit analysis that considers both financial costs as well as quality of care issues.

**DCF Concerns**

The Department is not opposed to the establishment of a workgroup to examine Riverview's future, however, DCF questions why the Commissioner of Mental Health and Addiction Services is charged with this responsibility to oversee the evaluation of a facility under the jurisdiction of the Department of Children and Families.

The Department is also concerned that the language in section 21 as drafted presupposes the closure of Riverview Hospital. The future of Riverview is a key issue to be addressed in this new DCF administration's agenda. Because of the need to move many of children that are placed out-of-state back to Connecticut, the current underutilization of Riverview places a significant role in the investment and exploration of ways to meet the needs of these children.

**Report Due April 15<sup>th</sup>**

The Department would like to point out that section 32 of Public Act 10-3 already requires DCF in consultation with the Child Advocate, to submit a plan by April 15, 2011 regarding the future of Riverview Hospital. We believe that this plan will provide data and other information that will guide the General Assembly and the administration in making a sound policy decision on the future of Riverview.

## **Background**

Riverview Hospital is the only publically operated psychiatric teaching hospital for children and adolescents in the State of Connecticut. The 88 bed facility provides inpatient psychiatric assessment and treatment for those ages 5 to 18 years of age. Riverview has the clinical expertise to provide mental health treatment services for children and adolescents who are experiencing extreme emotional and behavioral difficulties. Riverview Hospital functions as a Safety Net for the State by providing inpatient care to a mostly disfranchised and indigent population. Riverview Hospital serves an important role as the most intensive psychiatric treatment setting within the behavioral health continuum of care developed by the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and Behavioral Health Partnership (BHP). Riverview Hospital Admission Criteria as set by BHP is much higher than other private hospitals in Connecticut and require failed past treatments including unsuccessful inpatient hospitalizations. Riverview takes patients from private facilities with more complex histories and who can't be managed successfully in those settings leading to inpatient stabilization at Riverview. The expertise in the treatment of seriously emotionally disturbed children and adolescents has been developed slowly over the course of many years of staff experience at Riverview, and represents a specific set of clinical skills and knowledge that cannot be automatically transferable to other community hospitals.

Riverview Hospital offers inpatient services on eight units. Treatment provided at Riverview Hospital is trauma informed, culturally sensitive, person and family centered and embraces a holistic team approach providing comprehensive, state of the art care to children and youth of Connecticut. Interdisciplinary teams at Riverview Hospital consist of Child and Adolescent Psychiatrists, Psychologists, Clinical Social Workers, Nurses, Milieu Staff, Rehabilitation Therapists, Educational & Teaching Staff, Speech and Language Specialists, Occupational Therapist, Pediatrician, Dentist, and trainees from various disciplines providing round the clock treatment. Riverview Hospital is accredited by the Joint Commission (formerly JCAHO), which is a national organization providing accreditation to hospitals nationwide based on best practice standards of clinical care.